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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings from an action-research study of 12 New Zealand primary school principals working in partnership to develop their professional leadership. Since 1989, New Zealand schools have undergone extensive administrative reforms, resulting in increasing isolation among school leaders and a cult of managerialism. The action-research study sought to develop a theory of professional development for school leaders generally and to help the 12 principals understand and change their situations. The research design was based on the underlying principal of praxis. The principals observed each others' practices in their respective schools, gave feedback, conducted reflective interviews, and collaborated in planning and implementing action plans. Findings indicate that peer-assisted leadership development helped principals focus on their professional and school-development goals, reduced their feelings of isolation, and facilitated reflective thinking that led to proactive, transformative action and a realization of the wider picture of principals' practice in New Zealand. The program gave principals a feeling of united strength to deal with problems at regional and national levels. One peer relationship is described in detail to illustrate how reciprocal support developed into emancipatory actions at the school and national level. Contains 18 references and 1 figure. (LMI)

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DVISION A SYMPOSIUM
COLLEGIAL INQUIRY AS A STRATEGY FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Towards leadership praxis through principals' partnerships in New Zealand

Jan M Robertson The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

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This paper presents some of the major findings from a two and a half year action research study of 12 New Zealand primary school principals working in partnership to develop their professional leadership of their schools. The principals shadowed and observed each other's practices in their respective schools, they gave quality evaluative feedback and descriptions of observed behaviours to each other on predetermined areas of focus, they conducted reflective interviews, and collaborated in planning and implementing action plans to work towards desired school goals. This was peer-assisted leadership development (Barnett, 1990).

New Zealand schools have undergone extensive administrative reforms since the Tomorrow's Schools policy document was implemented in 1989 (Lange, 1988). School leaders have been working in a new educational environment which has effectively isolated them from their colleagues through competition for students and survival in a market-driven economy. This cult of managerialism (Codd, 1990) has made it difficult for school leaders to focus on the educative leadership role in their schools (Robertson, 1991) and the isolating nature of the reforms and the rapid pace of change has meant that principals have not always been able to look beyond their own situation to recognise national trends or take a stance on some of the issues that are of concern to them. This action research study, then, was a conscious effort not only to develop a theory of professional development for school leaders generally but in so doing, to provide professional development which would help these 12 school leaders to understand and then change their situation. This research design was based on the underlying theoretical principle of praxis. Giddens (1976) defines praxis as "the involvement of actors with the practical realization of interests, including the material transformation of nature through human activity" (p. 53). This involvement with the practical realization of interests leads those involved in praxis to a consideration of the centrality of power in social life which can be achieved through critical reflection on the social norms or rules. The critical reflection can then lead to the knowledge that there may be differential interpretations of these norms and this knowledge or conscientization (Freire, 1973) often leads to emancipatory behaviours occurring through the actors being energised to transform their situation. Lather (1986, p. 259) says

> ...praxis-oriented inquirers seek emancipatory knowledge. Emancipatory knowledge increases awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings, and in so doing it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes.

Emancipation is achieved when people can look beyond their own practices and find "ideological and institutional patterns which are to some extent responsible for maintaining these inadequacies and contradiction" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 180). The depth of this reflection and the ability to critique ideologies can be developed through action research programmes such as the one described in this paper. Kemmis (1985) states that "a research programme for the improvement of reflection must be conducted through self-reflection: it must engage specific individuals and groups in ideology-critique and participatory, collaborative and emancipatory action research" (p. 152). The methods in this research were designed with this in mind.

Involvement in an emancipatory action research study such as this paper describes is a commitment primarily to research as praxis rather than to the collection of data. This self-reflective community worked together to create new understandings and to provide critical propositions and explanations about a model of professional development as well as utilising a critical approach to their own leadership development. In this way, the principals *created* knowledge and they *used* knowledge to achieve praxis. The involvement in the development of the critical theory through this type of research also supported the principals in their educative leadership role when confronting educational, social and political issues. The resulting theory was "oriented towards transforming the situations which place obstacles in the way of achieving educational goals, perpetuate ideological distortions, and impede rational and critical work in educational situations" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 130).

The development of this kind of theory was particularly relevant in this research. Professional knowledge is often out of step with the changing situations of practice and particularly so, in New Zealand at the time of this research. The search for an education theory for the continuing professional development for New Zealand school leaders, within a climate of rapid and relentless change and political and social demands, necessitated an approach which not only employed the interpretations of the leaders themselves but gave them support as well as development as they took part in the research. At such times existing bodies of knowledge or accepted ways of acquiring such knowledge are unable to handle "the complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflicts" (Schon, 1983, p. 14) which are central to practice. The task of developing an education theory of professional development for school leaders is, therefore, complex and requires a critical perspective. This critical perspective to theory development acknowledges that knowledge is not the sole preserve of academic theoreticians and researchers. It acknowledges that knowledge is incomplete and constantly changing and is located in the leader's own school. The experience of school leaders needs validation. Smyth (1991) says that "one of the major suppositions of a critical perspective is that the experience of school practitioners...in solving day-to-day problems is considered to be on a par with that of the theoreticians who try to explain practice" (p. xv). Where people are endeavouring to come to grips with new administrative structures as the principals were in New Zealand at the time of this research there can be contradictory tensions. The challenges arising from these contradictory tensions required a body of knowledge which not only addressed these contradictions and tensions, but alongside this knowledge, a way of knowing which could flexibly cope with moving betwixt and between the multiple conflicts which arose. A "form of educational research which was conducted by those involved in education themselves" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 156) gave these 12 participants the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and coping strategies. In this way the research was reflexive as the principals and university researcher became more self-aware.

Principals can learn about their theories by articulating and justifying the actions they take or are about to take. They can also learn about their own educational theories vicariously through observations of the leadership actions of their peers. This also involves different perspectives which can lead participants to transformations of perspective as they "consciously confront their own circumstance" (Smyth, 1985, p. 8). Smyth (1986) also discusses the importance of having these outside perspectives to challenge habitual ways of knowing if praxis and therefore emancipation is to be achieved.

Praxis can be defined as "conscious, reflective, intentional action...and is the bridge between theory and practice - between reflection, analysis and action" (Duignan, 1989, p. 77). To achieve this conscious, reflective, intentional action - praxis - principals need many opportunities for discussion, observation, experimentation and reflection on their practice (Lee, 1993). This partnership's research programme was designed to provide these professional development opportunities for these 12 primary school principals.

a structure for school development

One of the main findings was that the partnership's programme helped to provide a structure for school development processes. As the partnerships developed, many of the principals began to use steps of action, reflection, observation, data gathering, and evaluation of their practice. They then replanned their next steps of action. It was after one year of the gathering and analysing of the data that the grounded theory indicated that action research practices were also taking place in some partnerships as well as the action research processes of the whole research study. There was evidence that there were longitudinal goals and visions of desired outcomes that the principals were working systematically towards meeting in collaboration with their partner. This meant that the processes had surpassed problem solving and had moved through at least three or four cyclical stages before the goals or outcomes were being achieved. One partnership's two year long process began with ideas gathered when they jointly attended a holiday course. These principals had the same desired outcome and were working collaboratively to achieve this in their individual schools. Emancipatory action research was evident when one principal worked through the Education Review Office's Effectiveness Review process with his partner. This process is described in a case study at the end of this paper. Two other principals were working on the development of their deputy principals' leadership and performance agreements. A rural teaching principal was developing appraisal processes; another was developing resource-based learning philosophies throughout the school; another principal wanted to develop and implement a five year strategic plan of school development. The principals' partners were working with them to a lesser or greater degree on the achievement of these goals, depending on the level of involvement and regularity of contacts.

The principals had not set out to undertake pieces of action research. In the early stages of partnership development the principals were often just observing and reflecting and discussing various issues in their schools. However, the principals all moved quickly to defining a focus for their partner's visits to their school so that they could receive some high quality feedback on a particular area of professional development that they had identified. They began 'setting up' their partner's visits around such things as: a senior staffmeeting; a full staff meeting; a Board of Trustees' meeting; a conflict situation with a staff member. They took notes, made action plans and reflected on their actions. The systematic process of action research did take time to develop. The theory and a model of action research - the model developed from an analysis of the data of their collaborative processes - was introduced at the stage when it became apparent that a more formal structure could assist the principals to achieve their goals more effectively. This model - because grounded in the theory of their practice - affirmed and validated their practice. Their action research processes and action plans had evolved naturally out of working regularly and systematically with their partner towards attaining their school goals. The theory affirmed what they were doing. They also began to fully realise how they were involved in the making of theory. The beginnings and continuing processes of action research had to be fostered by allowing the principals time to reflect upon the goals to be achieved. This was extremely important and therefore built in to the full session days. The following are examples of some of the goals that the principals set.

- To lead the staff positively through the upcoming Effectiveness Review early next term.
- To establish Resource-based Learning across all rooms and specialist rooms for 1994.
- To set a better system of appraisal in place.

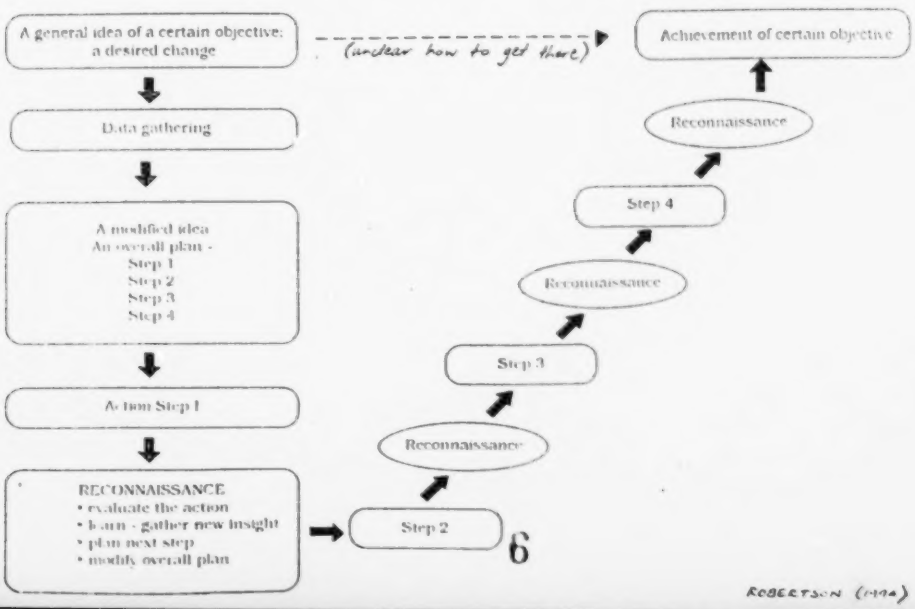
They all started then, with a perceived outcome or professional goal that they wanted to achieve. They were not always sure how to achieve it however. They then developed an initial plan, of which the first step was usually more data gathering of the current situation.

- •[Partner] will be able to first observe, and then assist me in getting all staff on board (F/N:4/8/93).
- Looking at areas such as organisation of time (class, staff, administration, secretarial, cleaning, environment) (F/N:14/3/94).
- Interview each staff member separately to get agreement on Performance Agreement Contracts (F/N:4/8/93).

The principals then carried out their first action(s), with or without the observation and feedback of their partner, and then reflected on the outcomes of the action and the necessary directions to take from this stage. This reflection was more like the reconnaissance that Lewin (1948) described which involved evaluating the action, gathering new insight, planning the next step and modifying the overall plan. One principal described this ability to reconnoitre as one of her most important professional developments over the two and a half years of her involvement in the research.

> [The most important things that happened to me were] Being made to examine my actions reflectively and the action research programme and how it is going - having to look at outcomes objectively - Is this what I want? Where do I go now?
>
> (F/N:1/8/94)

They evaluated, they learned from their actions, they planned the next step and then they modified their overall plans. The principals then carried out their second action, and went through a series of action steps and spirals of reconnaissance as they moved towards their desired outcome. The following diagram is my conception of the action research processes as carried out by these principals in their schools. It most closely relates to the processes described originally by Lewin (1948) most importantly in that the principals start with a perceived outcome and that the way to get there is not always identifiable in easily defined steps. It is the reconnaissance after each action which helps the principal decide "Where do I go now?" They sometimes required outside assistance to help them achieve their next actions. But they were always aware of the desired outcome and worked systematically and collaboratively towards it.



The collaborative nature of the Partnership's programme was a key feature in leading the principals into action research processes. One of the most important functions of the Partnership's programme in assisting these school leaders to achieve their professional and school development goals, was the 'conscience' type effect of the partner in keeping them focused and moving systematically ahead to actually achieve the goals. The reality of the principal's job has meant that principals get sidetracked by the short term issues and sometimes have difficulty maintaining the momentum to achieve the long term goals. One principal described his daily job as dealing with the "immediacy of the trivia".

> It is the immediacy of the trivia. What you do is you try at that point of time to clear it up because our jobs are a whole series of time, put together by interruptions. The interruptions tend to catch your attention at that time. (F/N:1/6/93)

Getting sidetracked by the trivia and managing "time put together by interruptions" often meant that the principals were unable to stand back and look at the school development plan and the amount of progress that was being made towards school goals. School development plans were not usually followed with any sort of structure or time frame. The principals found it was always very easy for them to focus on systems and sports organisation and forms that needed filling and budgets that needed finalising when they met with their colleagues, but that it was much more difficult to find opportunities to focus on their own leadership actions. This was how one principal described it to me.

> The partnerships focus principals into leadership issues and seek evaluation. Although we may wear many hats in our schools we are the professional leaders and sometimes...other issues can take priority. (F/N:14/3/94)

The structure of this Partnership's programme gave them the opportunities to focus on their leadership actions. One principal stated in cassette reflection to me that he had no doubts that his involvement in a professional partnership had helped him focus and, subsequently, improve his leadership and that this was the greatest benefit of the programme and he wished all principals could be involved in it. "However it is done, there is no doubt about it. It does assist in the development of professional leadership". The principals were moving into more critical reflection on their practice.

Findings showed there was strength gained from the support and affirmation of working closely with a professional colleague and the subsequent loss of feelings of isolation. There was a greater focus on the quality of education in their schools and on their own leadership styles and development. The principals became more open to new ideas and growth which lead to further reflection on practice and then informed committed actions taking place. There was greater responsibility taken for self-development and therefore increased intellectual independence on the part of the principals. Partnerships enhanced the likelihood of emancipatory behaviours occurring. The concept of leadership denotes proactive, transformative action and these principals moved from being reactive and isolated, to proactive and politically empowered through belonging to the group of principals involved in the research.

The self-development and increased responsibility for continued professional development and lifelong learning also led to a realisation of the wider picture of principals' practice. When I discussed early findings in the research with the principals they were able to see their situation from another perspective and to "see the research as a whole" (F/N:14/4/94). One article I wrote on their experiences was talking about the importance of leaders taking the time to climb the tallest tree to see if they were actually working away in the right jungle (Covey, 1989). A rural teaching principal stated that this was the reason that he would continue with his partnership in the future.

> It is too easy to go overboard in a school such as mine especially living on site. So I will need to be reminded to keep my head up or "climb the tree"
>
> (F/N:1/8/94)

Seeing the "whole" and "taking time to climb the tree" occasionally, heralded the beginnings of emancipatory behaviours being taken by the principals. When the principals were able to reflect on the actions of their partner and subsequently reflect on their own actions after seeing their partner in action, they began to realise that they did not have to continue practising in the way they had previously been doing. These realisations were the beginnings of emancipation. The principals were beginning to see that changing the structures and the ways they had previously worked could empower them in ways they had not realised before. They began to take more informed committed actions which lead to the beginnings of their emancipation as they approached their leadership in partnership. They began to see the problems they were facing were not only at the micro level of their school, but were also at the macro level of education in New Zealand generally. Therefore, the professional partnerships helped these school leaders to refocus on their leadership for a long enough period of time to be critically reflective not only about what is happening within their schools but also about what is happening to school leadership in New Zealand. The principals voiced the dilemma that they felt they were implementing things that they did not necessarily think were a good thing for their schools. They seemed to be acting as "middle managers" (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) for the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office. They were vulnerable in this new environment. They did not have a united voice. The Partnership's programme focused the principals on to the leadership issues that they were all experiencing. This then gave the principals a feeling of united strength to deal with the problems, sometimes at the school level; sometimes at the regional or national level. Often in emancipation there is a necessity to look at whether current practices are supporting the hegemony or not and this research model was designed to be counter hegemonic. It encouraged principals to take actions, such as working with a colleague on school and leadership development, which are counter hegemonic as principals working collaboratively is not normal practice.

In this research an example of how the principals took these informed committed actions to change the structures was when one of the principals asked the Education Review Officers if his partner could be present at his Effectiveness Review and five other principals later followed suit. It was not normal practice for a principals to have a colleague attend these reviews, but the reviewers agreed to the request. The following case study demonstrates how the support of a partner at the review day led a principal to taking emancipatory action at the school level and then supported this principal as he became more political at the national level. The processes were those of emancipatory action research.

Case Study - Emancipatory Action Research
Effectiveness Reviews

Just before the full group session in August, 1993, one principal had been notified of an forthcoming Education Review Office visit to conduct an Effectiveness Review in his school. At the full group session of the Partnership's programme he **set an objective** of what he hoped to do - "to lead the staff positively through the review procedure". Although he was not clear on each of the steps he would take to achieve this objective, he knew that the desired outcome was a staff who were positive about the review and valued the process. He felt that his partner would be able to assist him to do this by "evaluating my performance in a non-routine type of school day - in terms of interacting with - staff; the review team; the events of the day" (F/N:4/8/93). Then began a phase of **data gathering**. His partner had previously been through an effectiveness review and he had discussed proceedings with him and read the report from the Review Office that his partner had received. He read through his previous review report. He talked with his staff.

He developed **a plan of action:**

- Ascertain as soon as possible the actual dates of the review.
- Decide on major focus points for the review with the senior staff and the review team and pass these on to [partner].
- Arrange the shadowing date.
- Decide, as far as possible, on the shadowing focus.

The shadowing of the principal on the Review Day became **the first step** in this emancipatory action research. This case study did not start off with the principal planning a piece of emancipatory action research - that developed after the first step - the Review - had taken place. It was initially just planned as a professional development exercise for high quality feedback on this principal's leadership performance. It was the research data that revealed this principal had moved easily into action research processes to solve the dilemmas he was facing.

Step One: The partner shadowed this principal on his Effectiveness Review Day. This is how the principal described the day with his partner.

> In actual fact it was quite good because his school has recently had a similar review and they were able to involve him quite informally in the interview situation...[Partner] basically sat there and just took his shadowing notes normally apart from the fact that he was involved in discussions from time to time.
>
> (F/N:23/9/93)

Then began a period of **reconnaissance and critical reflection**. The partner carried out a verbal high quality feedback session after the reviewers had departed for the day. He later gave the principal two pages of clear notes of high quality evaluative feedback on his observations of the afternoon with the reviewers. The principal then made a cassette reflection to send to me in which he reflected on the actions of the review day and about education generally in New Zealand. He thought back to words he remembered from a conference he had been to four years earlier.

> The focus has changed again, just a little bit more, and it is getting back to what Ivan Snook warned us about at our 1989 Intermediate School Conference (Snook, 1990). He said that you are going to be required to provide education like sausage manufacturers fill sausages and it will be inputs and outputs and no allowance made for individuals. It is not quite like that but it is very strongly "How do you define achievement for the whole school and in particular in these areas?"
>
> (F/N:23/9/94)

He reflected again on his philosophy and the school's achievement statements and **gathered new insights**. He felt good about the review day because he had been honest and up front and had "clearly known my school, my staff and the programmes that go on within it" (F/N:23/9/94). He began **reflecting** more deeply about the realities of educational leadership in the school. On the one hand, true leadership in trying to work with senior staff who were not as effective as the assistant teachers in the school and on the other hand, needing to take two hours out of the review week to deal with non performing painters to try and get something done about the ineffective job they had done in the school. He said cynically about the latter that he guessed that it in "some obscure way contributes to the advancement of the educational cause" (F/N:23/9/94).

The report of the effectiveness review arrived back from the Education Review Office. The principal described to me how he felt when he received it. "I took objection to the phraseology "The Board of Trustees is unable to demonstrate..."(F/N:24/11/93). He then discussed it further with his partner and they decided that the best action was for him not to accept it. The principal hoped he was going to get the support of his Board of Trustees in not accepting it. He knew his staff morale would plummet if he chose to accept the report as it was. His **reconnaissance** included discussions with his Board of Trustees about the actions that he proposed to take. They supported his proposed action of non acceptance of the report written as it was thus presented. These critical reflections led to the next **action.** The principal then contacted the Manager of the local regional Education Review Office and stated that he was not willing to accept his report and demanded to meet again with him and the reviewers. This meeting was positive and the reviewers agreed to alter the wording in the way the principal wanted. He did not leave the matter there. **Reconnaissance** then included talking to other principals who had also received reports around that time. There was a regional principals' conference on at the time and the principal took every opportunity to gather support. The principal raised the issue with two reviewers who were attending the conference. He spoke also with two ex-reviewers. He spoke with other principals and one asked him for a copy of his report as she also had a concern about the one she had received from a recent effectiveness review. The next **action** he took arose almost simultaneously. The Chief Executive Officer of the Education Review Office perchanced to overhear some of the conversations and this principal then, in the height of this support and confidence in his convictions, spoke to her directly about the concerns that he had about the reviewing and reporting process. This is how he described the day to me in a later interview.

> It was discussed quite widely and I got tremendous professional support and as a result of that I think we have made a breakthrough on certain phraseology around the country.
>
> (F/N:25/2/94)

This principal had taken his **emancipatory actions** to a national level. I asked him why he thought this was such an important educational issue to pursue and he replied that he felt it was not an accurate statement of fact and that it was not the Board of Trustees fault that certain things could not be shown. Some of the areas were being newly implemented as was a new system of assessment, and the fact that Board of Trustees' members were mostly lay people who had nothing to do with the process except the legal responsibility to see that it is done made it equally ironical. He also felt that there would be bad spinoffs for the school if the press got hold of an isolated statement such as that. He could see the headlines already. "SCHOOL UNABLE TO PROVE PROGRESS" and felt that "it would be bad for the school, bad for staff morale and bad for parent-school relationships" (F/N:25/2/94). The principal was later pleased with the final report when it arrived. He **reflected** that the Education Review Office did have a role to play in ensuring accountability in schools in New Zealand and found the report relevant to the school development plan.

He said

> It has highlighted the need, that we need to be aware that we need to be able to show the 'added-value' over two years. Our system of recording data needs not only to show the added value but that we can use that recorded data to improve the quality of instruction and to add more value...the action plan for this next year is to continue to fine-tune our assessment and evaluation.
>
> (F/N:15/2/94)

This principal now felt more positive about the role of the Education Review Office and was able to see their report in the whole scheme of the self-managing school. His staff were positive about the outcome and the final report and demonstrated their continuing commitment to better learning by agreeing that the following year's focus would be on assessment and evaluation procedures in their classrooms. The principal was already setting further professional school goals. His emancipatory behaviours did not end there with the arrival of an acceptable report however. The next **action** he took was at a meeting of the local principals' group. The Regional Manager of the Review Office was scheduled to speak to the group and he had asked this principal to raise the issue and put it on the agenda. Various other principals then put in their views which further supported this principal's actions. This principal's actions helped the other principals in the group. He said "Now the other principals all know what is expected for them in terms of the effectiveness reviews and the data that they need to have to show this progress"(F/N:15/2/94). He empowered the other principals in his local group. The effects of his actions went wider than his own school, to regional level and then "...on to a national basis in terms of getting the phrases right - because it had to be cleared through head office. Probably my lobbying..."(F/N:15/2/94).

His "lobbying" and the recent politicisation within his role as an educational leader meant his actions had an effect at the national level. I asked him whether he felt that his confidence to be proactive had arisen from having his partner actually present on the review day and from being able to discuss the report with him in the light of his firsthand knowledge of what went on. His reply left no doubt that the partnership had been his initial source of strength.

> Oh, my word yes! Absolutely. I suppose that the mere presence of a colleague that knew what it was all about, who had been through it himself, did several things. It spurred you on to give a good performance. I knew also that the impressions and information that he would be storing up would be informed ones if I needed further support for any follow-up.
>
> (F/N:15/2/94)

He went on to add "I am not a political activist. I have never been one of those" but said that he had felt so strongly about the issue and knew also that he had the support of his colleagues. Kemmis (1985) states that reflection itself is a political action. His emancipatory **actions** had not ended. Later in the year, I received a cassette reflection from him after he had just read an article by Kelvin Smythe (1994) entitled The Education Review Office Should Go. He had read it with interest and asked that I circulate it to the research group. Meanwhile he was planning national-scale action.

> I sent a copy of it off to the organiser of our national conference in Dunedin with the suggestion that he give it out with the conference papers in that it might stimulate a bit of discussion around the bar if nothing else.
>
> (F/N:12/5/94)

At the Dunedin Conference the reaction to the article was "very, very strong." The principal described it to me at a much later date.

> On the morning of the last day there was a panel discussion and one principal who was very concerned about the whole issue of the Education Review Office and had been fired up by the article, was speaking about it as the Chief Executive Officer of the Education Review Office walked in. She later wrote to the President of Intermediate Schools' Principals' Association to ask for a meeting to discuss what could be done to improve ERO's image in the eyes of Intermediate Principals.
>
> (F/N:11/11/94)

This then was emancipatory action at the national level. At the next full session of the research group, the principal shared his review experiences with the other principals. They were all very interested. One of the research team had also just finished a short-term secondment on to Education Review Office team so the insider information was particularly valid. The largest indicator of emancipation having occurred was that every other principal in the research team, who had an effectiveness review scheduled in the near future, then asked the Review Officers if their partner could be present. Five other principals shared the review days with their partners before the end of the research programme and each and every one indicated how professionally supportive and fulfilling that experience of having their partner present, had been.

The partnerships can help move principals beyond the day-to-day problem solving into more critical reflection on their practice and, subsequently, these types of emancipatory actions. Through the support and affirmation and lessening of feelings of isolation by working closely together in their partnerships, and in a group of researchers such as in this study, the principals became open to new ideas and growth. The principals became willing to accept responsibility for their own leadership development, and in doing so, developed an awareness of the leadership actions and development of others around them. This awareness and fortification from the unity thus received, led to the principals taking informed committed actions which in turn led to their feelings of emancipation. In this way then, the partnership's model of professional development became institutionalized in their practice.

The depth of reflection and collaboration that was occurring within the partnerships as the principals worked consistently in their schools to achieve their professional and personal goals was one of the most evident leadership developments identified in the data gathered. The ongoing relationship with a colleague helped them to formalise the school development structure and ultimately helped them to achieve the goals because they had their partner acting as an outside facilitator to keep the focus and impetus in the right direction. Their partner's involvement helped the principals to monitor and maintain their progress towards their goals. When these principals actually focused on their leadership actions to achieve their professional goal, changes in practices occurred more rapidly. Kemmis (1985) speaks of critical social science, such as this action research study, as conceiving its audience to be wider than the group concerned. There could be changes in national policy and inservice development programmes based on the findings of this research.

In summary, it is a primary claim of this study that a true educative leadership of our schools needs preserving and principals' philosophies of education are strengthened through dialectical theory building and praxis. The theoretical component of praxis in this research methodology was embedded and interwoven throughout the researcher's and participants' actions and interconnectedness. The interconnectedness and reciprocity between researchers and research participants, and between theory and practice has demonstrated how the research was designed to "...consciously use our research to help participants understand and change their situation" (Lather, 1986, p. 263). This research was therefore practical and based on the needs and concerns of the practitioners involved. Aristotle referred to praxis as "doing" rather than "making" (Smyth, 1985, p. 132). This definition aptly describes the research - it required informed committed action on the part of all the participants through the processes of being involved in this research. Involvement in the research assisted the principals to be able to distinguish "between practice as habitual or customary, on the one hand, and the informed, committed action of praxis, on the other" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 190). The principals became more critically reflective about their role and their leadership within their schools and about education in New Zealand and in so doing, began to change structures and practices that they found inhibited children's learning, which afterall, is still the bottom line in the role of an educative leader.

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